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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who hears our prayers and listens to our cries for help, thank You for Your mercies that come to us new each day. You save us with Your strength, continually showing us Your unfailing love.

Help our lawmakers today to discern Your voice and do Your will. Lord, give them the ability to differentiate Your guidance from all others, permitting You to lead them to Your desired destination. Speak to them through Your Word, guide them with Your Spirit, and sustain them with Your might.

O God, You are our rock, our fortress, and our Savior. All Your promises prove true.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

THE APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, the Republican-led Senate passed, by an overwhelming majority, the first appropriations bill of the year—the energy security and water

infrastructure funding bill. The Republican-led Senate did so in record early time. We began considering an annual appropriations bill this year at the earliest point in 40 years—40 years—and then we passed an annual appropriations bill this year at the earliest point in 40 years. Passage of this bill also marks the first time the Senate has passed an individual energy and water funding measure since 2009.

This shows what is possible with a little cooperation and regular order. By returning to regular order, we are better able to make better decisions about how taxpayer dollars are spent through the appropriations bills.

Here is what we mean when we talk about returning to regular order. We mean working in committee and allowing Senators from both sides to have their voices heard. We mean bringing bills to the floor and empowering more Members to offer suggestions they think might make a good bill even better. We mean working through hours of debate and deliberation, processing amendments from both sides, and then arriving at a final bill that actually passes.

That is just what we did here, and it resulted in the record early passage of an energy and water appropriations bill that will help support economic development, waterways infrastructure, and energy programs—initiatives that are important in my home State of Kentucky and in States across our country.

So I want to thank Senator ALEXANDER for working diligently with Senator FEINSTEIN to move this bill forward. They collaborated with both Democratic and Republican colleagues to ensure a fair process and an outcome that a majority of Senators could support.

I also want to thank Chairman COCHRAN and Ranking Member MIKULSKI for working within the Committee on Appropriations to move appropriations measures so early this year. We have

already begun considering two more of them this week. The first measure is the transportation and housing infrastructure bill. It will make smart investments in important infrastructure priorities. It will strengthen our surface transportation network and help make air travel safer, more efficient, and more reliable.

I thank Senator COLLINS for her dedicated leadership on this important legislation.

The second measure is the Veterans and Military Construction funding bill. It will increase accountability at the VA and help ensure veterans receive the health care and benefits they rely on. It will advance vital national security projects, such as missile defense, and help ensure military families are supported with housing, schools, and health facilities to serve them.

This is the result of great work by a true champion of veterans—Senator KIRK. Senator KIRK and Senator COLLINS both worked hard to move these bills out of the Committee on Appropriations with unanimous bipartisan support. Now they are working hard to pass them together out here on the floor. They have already lined up several amendments that we will consider later today.

I would like to say a few words about one of these issues in particular. Both Republicans and Democrats agree that preventing the spread of Zika is a bipartisan priority. That is why Members from both parties have been looking at different approaches to properly address the situation. They worked through the best avenue to address the funding that may be needed to do so—the appropriations process—and came up with several different approaches for us to consider later today.

One amendment is from Senators BLUNT and MURRAY. It is a targeted approach that focuses on immediate needs while also providing resources for longer term goals, such as a vaccine. It includes accountability measures and represents a notable departure

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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